

Concern over tobacco packaging as kids say packs have more influence than celebrities

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The power of packaging is twice as likely as celebrities to influence children (40 per cent vs 20 per cent) when they think about buying a product, according to a new YouGov survey* - boosting the argument for putting tobacco in plain standardised packs to discourage children from smoking cigarettes.

Cancer Research UK commissioned the survey which found that children aged eight to 15 are more likely to think that bright, colourful or interesting packaging would tempt them to buy something in a shop (40 per cent) than whether it was made by a well-known company (27 per cent), whether the product sponsored an event – such as the Olympics – (15 per cent), or even if it had a special point of sale display in store (22 per cent).

While only a fifth (20 per cent) said seeing a celebrity using a product would make them more likely to buy it, double this number said bright, colourful or interesting packaging would.

The figures are released today as the charity awaits the results of an independent review into the health impact of plain, standardised tobacco packaging expected by the end of March.

The survey also reveals that children view some of the brightly coloured tobacco packets on sale in shops today much more positively than the proposed plain, standardised packs.

Brightly coloured Pall Mall (59 per cent) and Mayfair (63 per cent) packs are less likely to be viewed as harmful than a standardised pack (89 per cent).

Children are more likely to rate a brightly coloured Pall Mall pack (23 per cent) or blue Mayfair pack (23 per cent) as 'cool', compared with only seven per cent who thought the standardised pack was cool. What's more, a third of children (36 per cent) think that they would be more likely to buy a product if it had 'cool' packaging.

Earlier research shows that standardised packaging would remove all attractive, stylish designs and marketing gimmicks from tobacco packaging to reducing their appeal to new smokers and increasing the impact of picture health warnings.

Since tobacco advertising became illegal in the UK in 2002, tobacco companies have invested in a larger range of cigarette packaging to attract new smokers. Most of these new smokers are children, with more than eight in ten starting by the age of 19.

Elizabeth Bailey, Cancer Research UK Ambassador from Luton and mother of two, said: "It's shocking to see how much of an impact packaging can have on tempting children to try a product, especially a highly addictive drug such as tobacco! I want to protect my daughters from marketing techniques that could entice them into a deadly habit. It's vital these dangerous products are sold in plain, standardised packaging."

These figures have been released as the charity awaits results of an independent review of public health evidence for standard packs chaired by paediatrician Sir Cyril Chantler.

Alison Cox, Cancer Research UK's head of tobacco policy, said: "This

survey is a timely reminder of the huge marketing power of packaging on young people. Attractive packaging is a key reason that young people are tempted into a lifetime of nicotine addiction, an addiction that ends in death for half of all long-term smokers.

"These findings add to a weight of existing evidence proving that clever design gimmicks distract from health warnings and portray smoking as something glamorous and harmless. By stripping cigarette packs of these attractive designs and bright colours, standardised packaging will give millions of children one less reason to smoke. It's vital that we protect our kids by reducing the attractiveness of this deadly habit.

"After the results from the Chantler review are published, we urge the government to make standard [packaging](#) a reality as soon as possible."

In the UK alone, smoking kills an estimated 100,000 people every year. Tobacco causes more than eight out of 10 cases of lung cancer, and starting smoking at a young age greatly increases the risk of lung cancer. At least 13 other types of cancer are also linked to [tobacco](#), including oesophageal, mouth, bladder, bowel, pancreatic and kidney cancers. Half of all long-term users will die from their habit.

More information: For more information about Cancer Research UK's campaign for standardised packaging, visit www.cruk.org/standard-packs.

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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